





# Green Communities Initiative

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THE GREEN COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE PROMOTES THE greening of Ontario by encouraging communities to increase energy and water efficiency, reduce waste and prevent pollution. The aim is to achieve results in all sectors — residential, commercial, industrial, institutional and educational — as well as in transportation.

The program is closely linked with Ontario's Green Industry Strategy because it helps build markets for Ontario companies that provide goods and services related to energy efficiency, conservation and environmental protection. In addition, the program contributes to Ontario's economic growth by creating and preserving local jobs and stimulating local economies.

A distinctive feature of the Green Communities Initiative is that it encourages community-wide action based on strategic planning. Participating communities set their own goals and choose their own methods for achieving them, and this leads to self-sustaining activities that continue beyond the initial period of government involvement. The ministry's role is to provide funds for strategic planning and project implementation as well as expert advice on program management and conservation measures.

The program was launched in 1991 as the Energy Efficient Communities Program with pilot projects in Atikokan, Cornwall and Sarnia. The following year the program evolved into the Green Communities Initiative and the focus broadened to encompass energy and water use, waste reduction and program management.

By mid-1994, Barrie, Collingwood, Elora, Guelph, London, Markham, Ottawa, Peterborough, Port Hope, Riverdale in Toronto, Sault Ste. Marie, Thunder Bay and Quinte (Belleville) had joined the program.

## Home visits

Home Green Up Visits play a central role in the program by showing householders how to achieve a greener lifestyle and at the same time reduce their utility bills. To help householders carry out recommended upgrades and retrofits, a leading financial institution is offering special loan arrangements.

The spending that results from Home Green Up Visits provides an important economic boost to the community by creating new business for local suppliers of building materials, hardware stores and other merchants. Home improvements also create jobs for local tradespeople. Further benefits include:

- \* lower energy and water bills for householders,
- \* increased sales for Ontario companies that supply green products and services, and
- \* reduced infrastructure costs relating to water and sewage treatment and energy transmission.

Activities carried out to date under the Green Communities Initiative include:

- \* More than 10,000 Green Home Visits, resulting in average energy savings of 10 to 15 per cent and water savings of 20 to 30 per cent. Waste reduction averages 30 per cent.
- \* Green analyses in the institutional, commercial and industrial sectors. These have identified potential cost reductions worth millions of dollars and have encouraged an expansion of employee training.
- \* Establishment of community storefronts and demonstration centres that provide householders and retailers with information on products and technologies. Other services include seminars and demonstrations as well as training for employees, contractors and assessors.
- \* Transportation activities such as car clinics and tune-up programs. Other activities promote the increased use of bicycles, public transit and car pools. In one community, the



program led to the establishment of a permanent recycling station for used lubricating oil.

- ✿ Educational activities in schools that include presentations and field trips, training programs for maintenance staff, and environmental fairs.
- ✿ Greenspace initiatives such as community gardens and xeriscaping demonstrations.
- ✿ Innovative projects such as Canada's largest domestic hot water solar installation.

For additional information, please write:

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